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District of Arizona*

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Nogales, Sonora Man Convicted of Importing Methamphetamine Into the United States

TUCSON - Jose Cardenas-Mendoza, 40, a Mexican citizen, was found guilty of Possession With Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine, and Importation of Methamphetamine, 5.8 kilograms, by a federal jury in Tucson, Ariz. The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Cindy K. Jorgenson from January 9 - 11, 2007. The defendant is being detained pending sentencing, which is set before Judge Jorgenson on March 23, 2007.

The evidence at trial showed that on September 22, 2005, Cardenas-Mendoza possessed thirteen packages of methamphetamine, with a total packaged weight of 5.8 kilograms, and brought the packages from Mexico into the United States. Cardenas-Mendoza was stopped at the Grand Avenue Port of Entry in Nogales, Arizona, where a search of his vehicle revealed the packages of methamphetamine concealed in a hidden compartment, which was installed in the transmission hump of his Chevy Silverado pickup truck. Laboratory tests confirmed that the substance was methamphetamine with 88% purity. At trial, Cardenas-Mendoza denied knowledge of the methamphetamine in his vehicle, claiming that he had loaned the vehicle to an acquaintance just prior to the offense. The government presented evidence to show that his behavior and responses to questioning, both during the investigation and at trial, indicated that he was aware of the drugs and intended to bring them into the United States.

Convictions for Possession With Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine and Importation of Methamphetamine each carry a minimum penalty of 10 years imprisonment and maximum penalty of life, a \$ 4,000,000 fine, or both. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Jorgenson will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict was conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The prosecution was handled by Bradley Giles and Angela Woolridge, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-05-1969-TUC-CKJ
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